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TAGS: [KCRM](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [KFRD](#) [CVIS](#) [SW](#)
SUBJECT: SWEDEN & DISAPPEARING CHINESE CHILDREN

Classified By: DCM Stephen V. Noble, reason 1.4 (B) & (D)

¶1. (U) Summary. Since November 2004, 120 Chinese children have disappeared from Swedish immigration centers. In all cases the children arrived in Stockholm via air from Beijing or Moscow, immediately asked for political asylum, and within days disappeared while their cases were pending. Swedish officials have yet to discover where the children end up, but investigative leads indicate onward destinations including Denmark, Germany, Italy, France and the Netherlands. Law enforcement authorities here believe a network of individuals in several European countries supports this traffic. A disheartening mix of legal "protections," and apparent inadequate international cooperation, enables this phenomenon to continue. End Summary.

Arrival...Asylum...Disappearance

¶2. (U) On January 11 Poloff met with Hans Ihrman, Senior State Prosecutor in Stockholm, who confirmed media reports of the disappearance of 120 Chinese children who sought political asylum in Sweden at various times over the past eighteen months. Ihrman outlined the phenomenon, which he believes is managed by organized traffickers. Since at least November 2004 small groups of Chinese children have arrived at Stockholm's Arlanda international airport. The children (with estimated ages ranging from ten to eighteen) arrive unaccompanied and commonly without travel documents. They travel on flights either directly from Beijing (on Air China), or Moscow (on Aeroflot).

¶3. (U) Virtually all the children arrive with cell phones and small amounts of cash, said Ihrman. All request asylum, and are consequently sent to immigration reception centers. The children disappear shortly thereafter. (As the individuals in question are minors and have committed no crime, Sweden does not place them in confined centers.) The children's asylum requests are all identical. When pressed, they make vague references to having relatives persecuted for links to the Falun Gong religious movement; beyond that they say nothing. Ihrman said the children appear to have been "very professionally coached" in responding to interview questions. He confirmed that so far 120 children have disappeared in this manner. There are currently no such children in Swedish immigration reception centers.

Trails Point South

¶4. (C) Ihrman expressed dismay that after more than one year authorities here have yet to discover the ultimate destinations of the children. He added that all current evidence points to onward destinations including Denmark, Germany, Italy, France and the Netherlands. Ihrman confirmed

press reports that in May, Dutch police detained six Chinese children who had earlier disappeared from Swedish immigration centers. Ihrman told us that Swedish police only recently learned from the Dutch police that the children had been found traveling together on a train between Rotterdam and Amsterdam, presumably during some type of routine control. He characterized cooperation with Dutch police as "not so good." Ihrman said the six children subsequently disappeared before Dutch authorities returned them to Sweden, as would normally occur under the Dublin Convention for determining EU states responsible for examining asylum applications.

15. (C) The Swedish Prosecutor recounted a summer 2005 effort by police to follow a group of children who left a Stockholm reception center. Police observed the children receive instructions on their mobile telephones, after which they purchased bus tickets to Copenhagen. (Note. Swedish law prevents wiretapping in such cases; it also prevents authorities from restricting the children's movements. End Note.) Danish police picked up surveillance of the children at the border (Ostersund Bridge). From Denmark, the children boarded another bus to Germany. According to Ihrman, legal restrictions on surveillance in Germany prevented police from following the trail. Danish police literally had to watch the bus drive away at the border, said Ihrman. The children have not been seen since.

November Arrests Provide No Leads

16. (C) Swedish authorities, made their initial, and so far only, arrests in the case this past November. Acting on in collaboration with their Norwegian counterparts, Swedish police followed four Chinese children from the Norwegian

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border to Stockholm, where they were met by two adults, both Chinese nationals legally resident in Sweden, who run a sushi restaurant two blocks from the National Police Headquarters. After overnighing in the restaurant, the children traveled to an apartment in a Stockholm suburb, where police arrested the two adults and detained the children. (Note. The children reportedly originally arrived in Norway under circumstances similar those described in this cable. End Summary.)

17. (C) In the apartment police found several high-quality forged Japanese passports, and cash amounting to several hundred thousand Swedish kronor (equivalent of several thousand U.S. dollars). Ihrman told Poloff the arrested adults have refused to provide any information; they remain in detention, charged with immigration violations. The children have been returned to Norway. Ihrman, who had recently interviewed the children, said it appeared several individuals were involved in helping arrange their travel. While in Norway the children made telephone calls to numbers in France and Italy. Norwegian wiretaps of these conversations indicated France and Italy were the children's onward (though not necessarily final) destinations.

Raising the Issue in Beijing

18. (C) Swedish diplomats in Beijing have raised this issue with Chinese authorities, who have expressed their willingness to cooperate. The Chinese have assured the Swedes that it would be impossible for a child to leave China on an international flight unaccompanied by an adult. They have additionally conducted more careful checks on direct flights from Beijing to Stockholm. Ihrman posits that adults involved exit the flights independently in Stockholm or Moscow, and/or that the children board in China using false documents which they destroy en route. Last summer authorities delayed an Air China flight in Stockholm long enough to search the aircraft, but found nothing. Ihrman said Sweden may ask Chinese authorities to check on telephone

numbers in China to which suspect children have telephoned, as well as several Chinese bank account numbers they believe may be involved in suspect financial transactions, albeit ones not necessarily linked with the trafficking issue.

Comment

19. (U) While we admit we have only a superficial grasp of this situation, we are nonetheless incredulous about the narrow interpretation of laws and implementation of strict rights of privacy that paradoxically result in a basic loss of human rights of these minors. We report this to our neighboring posts in the hope they may have some complimentary information. While the European nations mentioned all are strong advocates of trafficking in persons conventions, it seems something critical is lacking on the ground when this trafficking actually takes place. Embassy Stockholm will continue to report on this phenomenon as information comes to our attention.

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